

March 7, 2023

**H.B. No. 6800 (Raised) AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC BOOK AND DIGITAL AUDIOBOOK LICENSING - Support**

Dear Senator Rahman, Representative Kavros DeGraw, and Honorable Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

My name is Olivia Scully. I am a resident of Middletown, and a librarian. I am writing in support of **H.B. 6800**.

Many library supporters you are hearing from are directors, administrators, trustees, and others with an indispensable high-level perspective on how the current unfair terms and pricing of eBooks prevent libraries from fully realizing their mission to truly serve one and all. I wholeheartedly agree with my colleagues regarding the impact this bill will have on libraries, to both save money and serve the community. And, I'd like to share my own unique perspective to illustrate part of why this is so important for regular Connecticut residents.

I have worked in Connecticut libraries for almost 12 years, and until recently, I was a librarian working directly with the public - boots on the ground. In my experience, we might have had one or two electronic copies of the latest Nelson DeMille, James Patterson, or Nora Roberts novel for our entire consortium to share, with a 6 month hold list to get through to make sure everyone could borrow that eBook. I cannot tell you the number of times I heard from patrons expressing abject frustration with the current state of digital borrowing.

I can completely relate to that frustration: I am an avid reader, and more than that, for me eBooks are a lifeline. I am autistic. I'm still unpacking what exactly that means for me, but, even though I have relatively low support needs, autism affects my everyday life. Including something as simple as borrowing a book.

For me, being autistic means sometimes it's a huge challenge for me to leave my home, to go borrow a physical book, because there is so much involved in that process. It takes anxious planning around the logistics, like what route to take and where I'll be able to park my car. There's a risk of sensory overload from noises and bright lights. Not to mention the stress of social interaction. Please understand, I love my library - the staff at the Russell Library in Middletown are doing amazing things! And when I can, I love going to the library. But most of the time, it's overwhelming for me to even think about it.

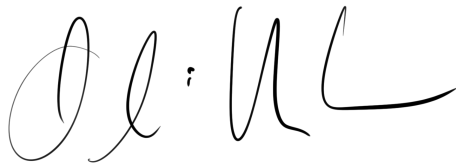
As you might imagine, this limits my ability to borrow physical materials from the library. So, when I want to borrow a book, my first stop is always to check online - and of course, I check the library because it's free, and I'm on a budget. Library eBooks give me access to a world of information, and enjoyment, that I would not have otherwise.

But libraries are also on a budget, and under current licensing terms, they simply cannot afford to pay for the same breadth of eBook titles that they can put on their physical shelves. And if they don't have a title available as an eBook, I usually just give up on my intention to read it, even if a hard copy might be sitting right there on the shelf or available to be sent as an interlibrary loan. If I do find an eBook title I want to read, I may have to wait 6 months on the hold list before it gets to my turn. Every now and then, I find exactly the title I want and it's available to borrow, right now. Of course, I pounce on the opportunity - such a rare occurrence, that it feels like I've struck gold!

But normally, the limitations of my library's electronic collection mean I cannot keep up with the newest releases, bestsellers, up to the minute books on current events, or even the latest books written by other adult autistic women that can help me better understand my own experiences. Easily borrowing such titles should not feel like a "Eureka!" diamond-in-the-rough moment. And it is beyond frustrating for me that I can't borrow eBooks with the same simplicity and abundance that other patrons have when they're hauling away tote bags full of hardcovers.

Having that same level of access would be such a huge benefit for me, and for others who face similar kinds of barriers. So I ask you: please support HB 6800 and help libraries to provide access to abundant digital collections for patrons like me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olivia Scully'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'O' and 'S'.

Olivia Scully (*she/her*)